

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6312
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN JOURNALISTS FAIL TO GET SOVIET VISAS

1. SUMMARY: FOUR NORWEGIAN JOURNALISTS FAILED TO GET VISAS TO ENTER THE SOVIET UNION DURING THE WEEK OF AUGUST 14 TO COVER FORMER LAW OF THE SEA MINISTER JENS EVENSEN'S VISIT TO MOSCOW FOR DISCUSSIONS OF SVALBARD FISHERIES PROTECTION ZONE. APPLICATIONS FOR THE VISAS WERE SUBMITTED WELL IN ADVANCE ACCORDING TO JOURNALISTS, BUT AS LATE AS AUGUST 14 THEY WERE TOLD BY SOVIET EMBASSY HERE THAT NO HOTEL ROOMS WERE AVAILABLE IN MOSCOW, SO VISAS COULD NOT BE GRANTED. MFA SPOKESMAN EXPRESSED GON REGRETS, AND THE NORWEGIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION ADDRESSED A STRONG PROTEST OVER THE REFUSAL OF VISAS TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. FOUR NORWEGIAN JOURNALISTS, REPRESENTING OSLO'S LEADING DAILY AFTENPOSTEN, NTB WIRE SERVICE, NRK RADIO, AND THE POPULAR TABLOID VG, FAILED TO OBTAIN VISAS TO TRAVEL TO THE SOVIET UNION DURING THE WEEK OF AUGUST 14 TO COVER THE MOSCOW VISIT OF FORMER LAW OF THE SEA MINISTER JENS EVENSEN, EVENSEN, NOW A SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL,
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HANDLES NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING NORWAY'S SVALBARD FISHERIES PROTECTION ZONE, AND HIS VISIT WAS PART OF HIS CONTINUING DISCUSSION WITH SOVIET FISHERIES MINISTER ISHKOV ON THIS QUESTION. THE FOUR JOURNALISTS HAD COVERED MOST OF EVENSEN'S MOSCOW TRIPS IN THE PAST.

2. THE FOUR NEWSMEN HAD ENCOUNTERED DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING

VISAS FOR THE USSR IN ALL OF THEIR PREVIOUS TRIPS TO MOSCOW BUT THE VISAS HAD ALWAYS COME THROUGH AT THE LAST MINUTE. ON THIS OCCASION, THE NEWSMEN REQUESTED THAT EVENSEN INTERVENE DIRECTLY WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO IN OSLO, WHICH EVENSEN DID OVER LUNCH AUGUST 11. KIRICHENKO AGREED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER, BUT THE VISAS WERE STILL NOT FORTHCOMING.

3. THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE WAS THAT HOTEL SPACE WAS NOT AVAILABLE IN MOSCOW, AND THAT VISAS THEREFORE COULD NOT BE GRANTED. THE NORWEGIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION HAS WRITTEN A STRONG LETTER OF PROTEST TO AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO, REJECTING COMPLETELY THE EMBASSY'S EXPLANATION FOR DENIAL OF THE VISAS. ACTING MFA SPOKESMAN PREBENSEN EXPRESSED THE GON'S REGRET THAT VISAS WERE NOT ISSUED, AND ADDED THAT THE GON DISAPPOINTED THAT THE NORWEGIAN PRESS WOULD BE UNABLE TO COVER PROPERLY THESE IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN NORWAY AND THE SOVIET UNION. MFA SPOKESMAN TOLD THE EMBASSY AUGUST 15 THAT THE JOURNALISTS HAD NOT REQUESTED MFA INTERVENTION TO HELP GET THE VISAS, AND THAT THE MINISTRY HAD ONLY LEARNED OF THE PROBLEM AUGUST 14, TOO LATE TO HELP THE NEWSMEN GET TO MOSCOW IN TIME FOR THE AUGUST 15-16 MEETING.

4. LABOR PARTY DAILY ARBEIDERBLADET REPORTED AUGUST 15 THAT THE FOUR JOURNALISTS HAD REQUESTED HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND VISAS THROUGH THE NORWEGIAN TOURIST AGENCY FOLKEFERIE, AS THEY HAD DONE ON ALL OF THEIR PREVIOUS MOSCOW TRIPS. FOLKEFERIE IN TURN DEALS WITH INTOURIST. ACCORDING TO ARBEIDERBLADET, THE SAME FOUR JOURNALISTS HAD ALSO FAILED TO GET HOTEL RESERVATIONS IN MOSCOW ON PREVIOUS TRIPS, BUT THE SOVIETS HAD PUT UP THE NEWSMEN IN AN OFFICIAL GUEST HOUSE DURING THEIR STAY. NO SUCH OFFER WAS FORTHCOMING THIS TIME.

5. THERE IS NO READILY APPARENT EXPLANATION FOR THE SOVIET ACTION ON THIS OCCASION, BUT WE AGREE WITH THE NORWEGIANS THAT THE REASONING OFFERED BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY IS A BIT FLIMSY SINCE THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE JOURNALISTS ON EVENSEN'S EARLIER TRIPS TO MOSCOW. THIS HAS BEEN A SUMMER OF UNTOWARD DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ALWAYS UNEASY STATE OF SOVIET-NORWEGIAN RELATIONS, AND THE REFUSAL OF VISAS IN THIS CASE MAY BE RELATED TO EARLIER STATED SOVIET OPPOSITION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SVALBARD FISHERIES PROTECTION ZONE BY THE NORWEGIANS.

6. SOME OF OUR CONTACTS IN THE MFA AND PRESS HAVE TOLD US THAT THE SUSPICION IS DEVELOPING AMONG SOME PRESS MEMBERS THAT MR.

EVENSEN MAY NOT HAVE REALLY PUSHED FOR THE VISAS. THEIR REASON-
ING IS THAT EVENSEN FORESEES A VERY DIFFICULT SESSION IN
MOSCOW WITH NO DRAMATIC RESULTS. ALWAYS AN ASTUTE MANAGER
OF HIS PRESS RELATIONS, SO THIS REASONING GOES, EVENSEN WOULD
PREFER NOT TO HAVE HIS CURRENT TRIP EXPOSED TO THE KIND OF
ACTIVE PUBLICITY HE USUALLY GENERATES WHEN HE EXPECTS HAPPIER
OUTCOMES. AND WITH THEIR KNOWN UNHAPPINESS OVER NORWEGIAN
PRESS TREATMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, THE SOVIETS PROBABLY
SAW LITTLE BENEFIT IN AN ACTIVE PRESS ENTOURAGE EITHER.
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